

**U.S. Rep. Sander Levin**  
Testimony before Michigan State Senate  
Hearing on Draft Redistricting Maps  
June 28, 2011

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present testimony on Congressional redistricting.

I have seen redistricting from the vantage point of a State Legislator, a County and State Party Chair and as a Member of Congress. I'm here today because your action impacts our state for ten years and I have very deep concerns about the map as currently proposed.

While 75 percent of my current district stays together under the Republican proposal, one's self interest must be less important than the interest of the residents of our State.

At the heart of our democracy is the ability to choose your elected officials. Democracy is undercut if, because of the mis-shape of congressional districts for purely partisan purposes, every election for Congress ends in the August primary.

At the heart of our democracy is competition. An exchange of ideas, healthy debate, and taking that debate to the public so they can make a choice in the General election. The process works better when there are competitive districts. In competitive districts you have to reach out to Democratic, Republican and Independent voters.

The proposed Republican map goes out of its way to avoid them, with its overriding goal of partisan advantage and protecting their incumbents.

The proposed Republican map gets it backwards. It allows incumbents to choose their voters through grossly gerrymandered lines, rather than voters choosing their Members of Congress.

The proposed Republican map shreds communities and counties in its drive for partisan advantage. It disregards the significance of community.

In 1992, I came to Lansing to testify on re-districting, in a different forum – a three judge federal panel, with 2 judges appointed by a Republican president and 1 by a Democrat. After taking testimony and reviewing both Democratic and Republican drafted maps, they drew their own congressional map for the State of Michigan.

It was a fully competitive one. John Dingell, Dale Kildee, Debbie Stabenow, Bart Stupak and I all had close and competitive elections that decade.

The legal processes have changed since then but we should hold that decade up as a model of what is possible for our state.

We have never had maps so bizarrely shaped in Michigan as the one that passed the House.

I understand what is now easy to do with computer technology. You just bring up the partisan information of voters and draw lines to group together as many of one party as possible. It might be easy, but it is wrong.

The districts in the House plan meander throughout Southeast Michigan, contorting geography to pick up pockets of voters in a clear effort to gain partisan advantage

The proposed 14<sup>th</sup> Congressional District stretches from the Detroit River to Pontiac. It is over 50 miles long but at some points is less than a half mile wide.

Or take the proposed 11<sup>th</sup> District, which starts in Canton in the south then heads north, ultimately bending above Pontiac to get to Troy – then bends back inward in almost a spiral to take in Birmingham and Bloomfield Hills.